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B1, 1.4(D)

Brian R Naranjo 02/11/2002 08:44:14 AM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

Cable Text:
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TELEGRAM

February 08, 2002

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To: SECSTATE WASHDC - ROUTINE
Action: WHA
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 345 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: PREL, KPAO, VE
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: VENEZUELAN MEDIA NOTES
Ref: None

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR DONNA J. HRINAK, REASONS 1.5 (B)
AND 1.5(C).

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR HOSTED TWO BREAKFASTS RECENTLY WITH PROMINENT VENEZUELA MEDIA OWNERS AND EDITORS TO DISCUSS ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS AND MEDIA-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS (PARAS TWO THROUGH ELEVEN). THIS CABLE ALSO BRIEFS ON NOTEWORTHY MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THOSE MEETINGS, INCLUDING CONATEL INVESTIGATIONS OF TELEVISION BROADCASTERS AND PRINT MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

FIRST BREAKFAST: PRESSURE ON CAPRILES GROUP

2. (SBU) IT HAS LONG BEEN ACCEPTED PUBLICLY. [REDACTED] THAT THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DIRECTLY PRESSURED THE CAPRILES GROUP TO SECURE MORE FAVORABLE PRESS TREATMENT. THE CAPRILES GROUP PUBLISHES TWO LARGE-CIRCULATION DAILIES: MORNING DAILY "ULTIMAS NOTICIAS," AIMED AT A 'POPULAR' (LOWER-INCOME, LOWER-EDUCATION, PRINCIPALLY 'D' SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP) STRATUM, AND AFTERNOON DAILY "EL MUNDO," AIMED AT A SOMEWHAT HIGHER (B/C) SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS.

3. (SBU) THE MOST PUBLIC EXAMPLE OF SUCH PRESSURES CONCERNS TEODORO PETKOFF, FORMER GUERRILLA, PLANNING MINISTER AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, LONG-TIME FRIEND OF DEFENSE MINISTER JOSE VICENTE RANGEL, AND NOW THE EDITOR OF AFTERNOON GADFLY "TALCUAL," WHO WAS EDITOR OF "EL MUNDO" FOR MOST OF 1999. UNDER PETKOFF, "EL MUNDO" HAD GROWN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT'S ADMINISTRATION AND POLICIES. PETKOFF'S SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM "EL MUNDO" IN DECEMBER 1999 WAS, PETKOFF CHARGED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE RESULT OF DIRECT PRESSURE FROM THE GOVERNMENT ON THE CAPRILES FAMILY. THE CAPRILES, OBVIOUSLY, DENIED THE CHARGES AT THE TIME.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, L. R. LOHMAN, DAS, 4/RPS
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 7 FEB 2012
DATE/CASE ID: 19 JUN 2006 200304421

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[REDACTED]

NEW EDITORS

6. (SBU) IN JUNE 2000, "EL MUNDO" PUBLISHED A STORY ALLEGING THE PRESENCE OF PRO-CHAVEZ ARMED GUERRILLAS IN THE VENEZUELAN MOUNTAINS, READY TO DEFEND THE REVOLUTION IF NECESSARY. CHAVEZ IMMEDIATELY DERIDED THE STORY AS FALSE, PUBLICLY ACCUSED CAPRILES OF AVOIDING TAXES AND THREATENED TO "SEND HIS BONES TO JAIL."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

BREAKFAST NUMBER TWO: THE MONTESINOS REPORTER

10. (SBU) The Ambassador breakfasted 1/18 with Patricia Poleo, editor of small-circulation "El Nuevo Pais." Poleo gained fame with her investigative reporting on Montesinos. These reports won for Poleo the prestigious journalism award given each year by the King of Spain. Poleo talked mostly of her excitement about receiving the upcoming award.

[REDACTED]

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13. (SBU) FEBRUARY 4 [REDACTED] FOUR SEPARATE
CADENAS - INCLUDING A MANDATED REPEATED TAPED BROADCAST OF
HIS RALLY WITH MVR SUPPORTERS. THE CADENA THAT SPARKED THE
MOST PROTEST WAS BROADCAST THAT NIGHT - INTERRUPTING THE
VENEZUELA-PUERTO RICO CARIBBEAN SERIES GAME. [REDACTED]

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ANOTHER STATE NEWSPAPER

14. (SBU) Previous Gov efforts to establish a niche among
the print media included the ill-fated, sort of daily
"Correo del Presidente" and the monthly "PSP - Politics,
Economics, and Oil" magazine, both explicitly published by
the government, and the irregularly-published "Force Point
Four," nominally an MVR publication that happens to come out
of the print shop of Mayor Freddy Bernal's Libertador
Municipality. All have withered away. But a new entrant is
daily newspaper "El Nuevo Clarin" (recalling the name of
former Interior Minister Miquilena's Clarin newspaper in the
1960s). The paper is in appearances independent of the
government, but its editorial policies (and praise from such
MVR stalwarts as AN member Juan Barreto, [REDACTED])
[REDACTED] leave no doubt over its
sympathies.

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CONATEL INVESTIGATIONS

15. (SBU) CONATEL HAS YET TO PUBLISH ITS DECISION ON ITS

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"ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW" OF GLOBOVISION BROADCASTS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE ALL-NEWS, ANTI-GOVERNMENT STATION INTENTIONALLY BROADCAST INACCURATE REPORTS AND/OR FAILED TO CORRECT INACCURACIES IN A TIMELY MANNER. CONATEL TOLD GLOBOVISION THAT ITS PRELIMINARY DECISION HAD TO BE PASSED TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR FINAL REVIEW. WHEN GLOBOVISION POINTED OUT (CORRECTLY) THAT THIS WAS SUPPOSEDLY AN ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION TO BE MADE BY THE NON-POLITICAL, TECHNICAL SUPERVISORY BODY, THE CONATEL REPRESENTATIVE REPLIED, "NOT IN THIS CASE." RUMORS ARE THAT THE STATION WILL FACE A TEMPORARY BROADCAST SUSPENSION OF 24-48 HOURS. CONATEL IS CONDUCTING SIMILAR "ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS" OF COMMERCIAL STATIONS VENEVISION AND, IT ANNOUNCED 2/6, RCTV. MEANWHILE, CHURCH-RUN VALE TV ALSO AWAITS A FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER IT WILL BE ALLOWED TO KEEP ITS BROADCAST LICENSE OR WHETHER THE STATION WILL REVERT TO THE STATE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SUCH UNCERTAINTY IS NOT DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE AGGRESSIVE ANTI-GOVERNMENT REPORTING.

EXCESSIVE MEASURES?

16. (SBU) Monthly magazine "Exceso" just a few months ago celebrated the end, finally, of a years-long libel suit against it, allegedly pursued to discourage similar investigative reports by it or imitators. The cover story of February's edition, due to hit the newsstands on 2/3, is a detailed report on the Gen. Cruz Weffer corruption allegations, and includes copies of receipts and other documents regarding money movements. But the magazine isn't available for sale, because an "unidentified single buyer" intercepted the copies before the distributor could get them to the kiosks and bought them all. (Or nearly all; the distributor managed to set aside some 5-10 percent of the issues and get them, two days late, to the kiosks.) There is one unconfirmed report that police in Sucre municipality went to a newsstand in the neighborhood of the presidential mansion La Casona and removed its copies of "Exceso." This is the sort of pressure a magazine publisher loves - since the first run has sold out, a reprint is due 2/8.

HRINAK

Additional Addressees:
None

CC:

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

Distribution:

TED6550
ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	AC-01
	DCP-01	NSAE-00	ACE-00	TEST-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/005W			

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4746

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INFO NSC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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FOR WHA/AND (NARANJO, SHAPIRO), WHA/PDA (BYERS)
NSC FOR AMB MAISTO
BOGOTA FOR PAO, DCN

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO, PREL, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN MEDIA NOTES

End Cable Text

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